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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**THE BEIJING OLYMPICS: POLITICAL IMPACT AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOFT POWER POLITICS**

by

Megan M. Granger

December 2008

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Alice Miller
Robert Weiner

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**THE BEIJING OLYMPICS: POLITICAL IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR
SOFT POWER POLITICS**

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Lieutenant, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, many commentators and scholars debated the potential impact of the Games in China. Some theorized that hosting the Games would lead to greater freedom and possibly democracy in China's political life. While the media debate focused on the optimistic possibility for change, scholars were more skeptical about the outcome. In the debate, the 1988 Seoul Games were used as an example of the power of the Olympics to change a nation.

Aside from Korea and China being located within the same region, there are few similarities between the two nations. In order to assess the lack of positive political change resulting from the Beijing Games, this thesis reviews the political history of the Olympic Games, the controversial selection of Beijing as host city, and the policy changes that resulted from the Games. While it is clear that Beijing's hosting of the Olympics stimulated political consequences in China, the event in the near term did not increase freedoms or a propensity for democratic governance. In conclusion, this thesis evaluates the possibility of long-term change as a result of the Beijing Games.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	OLYMPIC GAMES IN BEIJING REPRESENT A POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL CHANGE IN CHINA.....	1
A.	PURPOSE.....	1
B.	IMPORTANCE.....	1
C.	PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS	2
D.	DISCUSSION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	3
	1. Boycotted Games.....	3
	2. Historical Impact	5
	3. Political Impact	6
	4. Beijing – Selection Process and Controversy	9
	5. Elements of Soft Power.....	10
	6. Future Olympic Host Cities	12
E.	METHODS AND SOURCES.....	14
II.	HISTORICAL BASIS FOR EXPECTATION OF CHANGE	15
A.	IMPORTANCE TO HOST NATION.....	15
	1. Economic.....	15
	2. Nationalism.....	19
	3. Environmental.....	21
B.	HISTORY OF CONTROVERSY	21
	1. Selection Process	21
	2. Environmental Impact.....	23
C.	UNSUCCESSFUL USE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE	24
	1. Melbourne, 1956.....	24
	2. Mexico City, 1968.....	25
	3. Montreal, 1976.....	26
	4. Moscow, 1980.....	26
	5. Los Angeles, 1984.....	27
D.	SUCCESSFUL USE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE	27
	1. Seoul	27
III.	THE 2008 OLYMPICS: WHY BEIJING?.....	29
A.	ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS.....	29
	1. Water Pollution	30
	2. Desertification	31
	3. Air Pollution	32
	4. Social Results of Pollution	33
B.	HUMAN RIGHTS	33
	1. Beijing’s Promises.....	33
C.	BEGINNINGS OF CHANGE?	36
	1. Legal System.....	36
	2. Internet Freedom	37
	3. Transparency.....	38

IV.	“IF THE COST OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS IS TEARS, BLOOD, LIVES AND THE EVICTION OF PEOPLE FROM THEIR HOMES, THEN WE WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE THESE OLYMPICS”	39
A.	RELOCATION OF URBAN RESIDENTS.....	39
B.	UNREST IN TIBET.....	40
1.	Protest within Tibet	40
2.	Protest Along the Torch Route	42
C.	SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE	43
D.	DARFUR.....	44
E.	FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.....	45
V.	OLYMPIC GOALS ATTAINED?	47
A.	PUBLIC IMAGE	47
1.	Opening Ceremony	47
2.	American Killed	47
3.	Controversy on the Chinese Women’s Gymnastic Team.....	48
4.	Medals Won.....	48
5.	Impact of Russian Invasion of Georgia.....	48
B.	POLICY CHANGES MADE	49
1.	Press Freedom	49
2.	Human Rights	49
C.	POSSIBILITIES FOR LONG TERM-CHANGE	49
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	51
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	59

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BMCC	Beijing's Municipal Construction Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
DNS	Domain Name System
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IOC	International Olympic Committee
KGB	Russian translation of Committee for State Security
LAOOC	Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee
PRC	People's Republic of China
SPC	Supreme People's Court
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to assess the lack of positive political change resulting from the Beijing Games, this thesis reviews the political history of the Olympic Games, the controversial selection of Beijing as host city, and the policy changes that resulted from the Games. While it is clear that Beijing's hosting of the Olympics stimulated political consequences in China, the event in the near term did not increase freedoms or a propensity for democratic governance. In conclusion, this thesis evaluates the possibility of long-term change as a result of the Beijing Games.

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I. OLYMPIC GAMES IN BEIJING REPRESENT A POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL CHANGE IN CHINA

A. PURPOSE

In the past, the Olympic Games have served as an opportunity to showcase economic and political success. Japan, South Korea, and the Soviet Union all used the Games as a way to celebrate their achievements. Each of these country's Games, however, was met with controversy either with regard to the nation's political structure, international stature, or satisfaction and freedom of its populace. Whether international boycotts or domestic political transformation, the results in each case have been dramatic. As the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing approached, there was a great deal of speculation as to what impact hosting the Games would have on Chinese politics and policies.

China was an unlikely host nation for the Olympic Games. Human rights abuses, lack of freedom, and extensive environmental damage made Beijing a surprising and controversial choice. Based on historical precedent as well as current events, I assess China's response to international pressures and media attention associated with the Olympic Games. Additionally, I propose how this knowledge may be used by those who participate in the Games, as a soft power option in international diplomacy.

B. IMPORTANCE

The goal of the Olympic Games is not to incite political transformation, but to establish a global rapport via sporting events. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) claims that "the goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play."¹ The extent this charter has affected the IOC's selection of host nations over the years is debatable.

¹ International Olympic Committee. Promotion of Culture and Olympic Education, http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/culture/index_uk.asp, February 7, 2008.

Arguably, the IOC and the international community squander opportunities to advance human rights and freedoms by their failure to take more positive political action.

As a rising regional power, China's social and political progress is of great concern in preserving stability in Asia. The region is becoming increasingly economically interdependent, and thus each nation's stability has an impact on the region as a whole. China also faces major social, political, and environmental issues that threaten future national development. These issues were brought into the spotlight by both international media attention preceding the Olympics and recent domestic events including ethnic protests and major national disasters. The way in which China responded to international pressure regarding these issues may illuminate the extent to which the IOC and the international community can use their influence to change China's authoritarian social and political realities.

The modern Olympics have been a badge of economic success and prestige on the international stage. Host nations have felt it is essential to present themselves in a positive light. If they are successful, host nations gain financially and in terms of international prestige. If they are not successful, hosting the Games will turn out to have been a massive waste of resources and, possibly, a humiliating defeat. The pressure associated with these goals can push a nation to suppress or increase personal freedoms and even lead to regime change. The outcome of the Beijing Games adds to the record of political impact of Games over the past century, and so may influence how the Olympic Games can influence international political ideals in the future.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS

This thesis investigates how Beijing manages China's major social, environmental and political issues under the spotlight of international attention as it hosted the 2008 Olympics. In the months leading up to the Beijing Olympics, China saw major protests in Tibet and demonstrations in several countries through which the Olympic torch relay passed. Beijing's reaction to the Tibet protests was swift and brutal, involving military force. Many were jailed, and foreign journalists were removed from the scene. Beijing's

immediate goal was to prevent the events from going public on an international scale. Instead, the sporadic reports prompted massive international protests at Olympic Torch Relay sites.

The IOC encourages the Olympics to be environmentally friendly. Not only does Beijing have an abominable record of environmental safety, its air quality is some of the worst in the world. In a city which was preparing for a major international sporting event, many of the athletes were concerned with respiratory health at the Games. Additionally, water was transported from drought-struck areas in order to provide Olympic athletes, journalists, and tourists with clean drinking water. Will the changes that Beijing made to its environmental policies remain after the Games are over, improving Beijing's environment?

Similar issues exist in future host cities: Vancouver, London, and Sochi. To the extent that Beijing's hosting of the Games was a success, it will serve as a yardstick for future nations wishing to host the Olympic Games. To the extent that Beijing's Games were perceived as a failure, it may discourage bidding from states with similar goals.

D. DISCUSSION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the Olympic Games ranges from books on political history and basic medal statistics to contemporary magazines, journals, and newspapers discussing the current year's Olympic event. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus on the political history, soft power, and Chinese foreign policy, as well as contemporary publications specifically related to the Beijing Games.

1. Boycotted Games

While many nations have been individually banned from competing in the Games, it is rare to have an international boycott of a city's Games. In fact, just the threat of a boycott prompted South Korean protests, followed by a restoration of democratic processes.² During the Cold War, the major powers used Olympic boycotts as a means

² Congressional-Executive Commission on China. "The Beijing Olympics and Human Rights," November 18, 2002.

to send an international message. The two most publicized boycotts were of the 1980 Moscow and the 1984 Los Angeles Games. On a much smaller scale, North Korea sent a powerful message during the Seoul Olympics when it refused to participate.

The 1988 Seoul Games were symbolically opened by 76-year-old Korean Sohn Kee-chung, who won the marathon in 1936, but who was forced to compete in the Games under a Japanese name since Korea was still occupied by Japan.³ The most dramatic moments of the Seoul Games, however, happened before the opening ceremony. When South Korea was awarded the Games, North Korea tried to make them an issue of unity. Pyongyang demanded a half share in the Games. The official IOC policy had always been that the Games are awarded to a city and not a nation and therefore did not immediately support joint Games. After international pressure, however, the president of the IOC asked Seoul if it would be willing to share the Games. Seoul agreed only to a limited sharing of the Games, as it had been the city awarded the bid and had already begun construction programs. Pyongyang would not accept anything less than half billing and was therefore denied hosting duties. As a result, North Korea boycotted the Games. It was joined by Cuba, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua.⁴

Ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the United States were already a source of tension leading up to the Moscow Games in 1980. With the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the tensions came to a head. President Carter issued an ultimatum: if Soviet troops did not withdraw from Afghanistan by February 1980, the United States would boycott the Moscow Games. The American boycott was officially announced in March 1980.

A total of 36 nations officially refused the IOC invitation to the Moscow Games. Sixteen nations allowed their athletes to compete under the Olympic flag, but would not allow their national flag at the Games. The largest nations that participated in the ban were the People's Republic of China, West Germany, and Japan.⁵ The success of the

³ International Olympic Committee. Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1988, February 23, 2008.

⁴ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 226.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

American boycott was limited, as the Soviet Union did not change its policies or behavior. The boycott made a grand public statement, but it may have been more effective had the United States attempted its boycott earlier in the Games' planning stages. Additionally, the IOC never threatened to move the Games to another city. An Olympic boycott must be credibly attached with a loss of income in order for the host nation to take it seriously. In the event that a city has spent billions of dollars leading up to the Games, it would not want to see its efforts wasted by boycott or relocation.

Most observers agree that one of the consequences of the American boycott of the 1980 Games was the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Games.⁶ Leading up to the Los Angeles Games, the Soviet team constantly complained about the costs, the natural environment, and the political atmosphere in Los Angeles. Additionally, Washington would not guarantee the return of Soviet defectors. Ultimately, the Soviets declined to attend for reasons of "safety."⁷ The Soviet boycott was significantly less successful than the American one four years before, as few nations joined Moscow.

2. Historical Impact

Three cities that I examine in this section had similar goals when they were selected as host cities. Tokyo, Moscow, and Seoul each hoped to bring international recognition to its nation. Of these host nations, Japan and South Korea successfully used the Games as their opportunity to re-emerge as a world power. While Russia was already recognized as a world power, the Moscow Games which were moderately successful but soured by the American boycott.

In a symbolic gesture, the Olympic torch for the Tokyo Games was lit by Yoshinori Sakai, who was born in Hiroshima on the day the atomic bomb was dropped.⁸ Tokyo's first attempt at hosting the Olympic Games had been 1940. It won the bid to

⁶ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 196-198.

⁷ Ibid., 185.

⁸ International Olympic Committee. Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1964, March 3, 2008.

host those Games, but after the Japanese military invaded China in 1937, the IOC moved the Games to Helsinki. With the outbreak of World War II, the Games were canceled.⁹

Japan hoped that the 1964 Tokyo Games would mark its re-emergence as a fully sovereign and legitimate member of the international community. Ninety-three nations competed in the Tokyo Games--a total of over 5,000 athletes in 163 events.¹⁰ The Tokyo Games created little controversy and were supported by both of the Cold War superpowers. They were hailed as a great success and provided a model for future nations when staging the Games.

As previously stated, the Moscow Games did not meet with such fanfare. While they marked the first time a communist nation hosted the Olympics, the event was not well attended. While only 80 nations opted to attend, there were over 5,000 members of the press.¹¹ Freedom of the press was limited in Moscow. Some journalists at the time stated that they were threatened with deportation and followed by the KGB, while others stated that they found a comfortable environment. The Soviet Union defended its security measures as required for the safety of the athletes, the press, and tourists.¹² Nevertheless, the increased exposure to Western society and open communication with outside nations could have resulted in furthering democratic goals within the Soviet Union. Reasoning that light, the American boycott may have wasted an opportunity to advance progressive political goals.

3. Political Impact

The Olympics have had wide-ranging political impact, both positive and negative. The two most dramatic events to which the Olympic Games have been seen as a catalyst

⁹ International Olympic Committee. Full Story, http://www.olympic.org/uk/news/olympic_news/full_story_uk.asp?id=2158, March 3, 2008.

¹⁰ International Olympic Committee. Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1964, March 3, 2008.

¹¹ International Olympic Committee. Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1980, March 3, 2008.

¹² Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 184.

are the democratization of South Korea and the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Questions remain as to how essential the Games were to these events, but there is little doubt that they influenced both outcomes.

In the case of South Africa, Apartheid banned black athletes from competing on the same teams as white athletes. As such, the Olympic athletes from South Africa were all white even though the majority of the nation was black. South African athletes were first denied access to the Games in 1968. Douglas Booth and Richard E. Lapchick examine the impact of the boycott in separate articles.

Booth argues that the initial boycott in the 1960s was successful due to its limited goal—to desegregate sport in South Africa. Under international pressure and boycott, South Africa sanctioned multi-racial sport. The sport boycott then shifted goals which, ultimately, made it less effective. In the 1970s, it attempted the more broad social change of ending apartheid in its entirety. Toward this end, it enforced a blanket boycott on South African teams participating in international sport. Booth maintains that the blanket boycott, if applied selectively, would have produced more relevant results. While some South African teams were willing to integrate if they were given permission to compete internationally, they were not provided the opportunity. Removing this incentive also removed competition to desegregate more quickly. If certain teams had been allowed to compete outside of South Africa, it may have led the others to desegregate towards the same honor. Booth concludes that the sport boycott could have been a successful use of international pressure had it been applied with consistent and achievable goals.¹³

Similarly, Richard Lapchick concludes that the use of sport politics alone is not enough to change the cultural and historical underpinnings of apartheid. He argues that while a positive gesture, agreeing to multiracial sport at the international level did little to improve conditions on the small scale in South Africa. In other words, Pretoria was willing to desegregate to end South Africa's status as an international sports pariah, but it

¹³Douglas Booth, "Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott." *The Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 38, No. 3. (Jul. 2003), 477-493.

was not willing to desegregate at the club and city levels of sport. Lapchick concludes that domestic change must start small scale and rise to the international level instead of being imposed by outside forces.¹⁴

In the case of South Korea, the impact of the Olympics is far more clear. Jarol B. Manheim describes the Seoul Olympics as “public diplomacy”—a method by which one nation seeks to employ the media and public opinion to bring political pressure on another nation. While it is possible for a host nation to use this media attention in its favor, it is also difficult to control such a high profile event. “In this context, it might be useful to view the Olympics as a highly dramatic, highly visible, quasi-historical, intermediate-length event which possesses a sufficient dynamic of its own, under certain circumstances, to overwhelm those who control it.”¹⁵ The ability of a host nation to control both domestic and international media may influence the extent to which international public opinion will be focused on the host nation. In the case of South Korea, the Western media acted as a catalyst for democratic change in the months leading up to the Seoul Games.

David R. Black and Shona Bezanson also use the Seoul Games as a predictive tool for the possible impact of future Games. They specifically address the impact the Games might have had on the PRC. Their comparison between the two nations is based largely on the lack of human rights and the abundance of nationalism and pride via sport which was present before the Games. While they concede that the international context is now vastly different, they believe positive outcomes in Beijing may be predicted by the democratization of South Korea. “While... ‘regime change’ is not likely, an enhanced degree of respect for human rights and dignity in domestic political practices, albeit

¹⁴ Richard E. Lapchick, “South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 445. (Sep. 1979), 155-165.

¹⁵ Jarol B. Manheim, “Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy.” *The Western Political Quarterly*. Vol. 43, No. 2. (Jun. 1990), 279-295.

inflected through distinctive Chinese institutional forms, could be. At the very least, tactical concessions are probable... offering new spaces and opportunities for social mobilisation to emerge.”¹⁶

The 1988 Seoul Olympics combined domestic political agitation with a setting of intense international attention. Domestic political turmoil and public protests easily became international news. Protesters were demanding restoration of democratic political processes suspended in 1961 under former President Pak Chung-hui. In this context, the IOC pressured South Korea to end the turmoil or risk losing the Olympic Games to another city. In order to avoid the embarrassment of losing the Games, the government bowed to domestic pressure and restored democratic processes.¹⁷

4. Beijing – Selection Process and Controversy

Many question Beijing’s selection as an Olympic host city. China faces environmental and human rights issues, which some argued would be exacerbated by the hosting of the Olympic Games. Among these issues are water availability and air quality concerns. One-third of China’s population lacks clean drinking water, with the per capita water supply only one quarter of the global average.¹⁸ The problem is made worse by the pollution of 70 percent of China’s rivers, 80 percent of whose major tributaries no longer support fish.¹⁹ This vast pollution is the result of 200 million tons of sewage and industrial waste being dumped into the rivers in 2004.²⁰ China’s lack of water increased as the Olympics approached. The water consumption during the Games was expected to increase by 30 percent. The Beijing Olympics worsened the problem by redirecting water

¹⁶ David R. Black and Shona Bezanson, “The Olympic Games, Human Rights, and Democratisation: Lessons from Seoul and Implications for Beijing.” *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 25, No. 7. (2004), 1245-1261.

¹⁷ Charles K. Armstrong, *Korean Society: Civil Society, Democracy, and the State* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 58.

¹⁸ “Environmental Performance Review of China: Conclusions and Recommendations.” OECD.org, October 21, 2007, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/23/37657409.pdf

¹⁹ Cynthia W. Cann, Michael C. Cann and Gao Shangquan, “China’s Road to Sustainable Development,” in *China’s Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development* ed. Kristen A. Day (Armonk, New York: Columbia University, 2005), 6.

²⁰ Carin Zissis, “China’s Environmental Crisis,” CFR.org, October 21, 2007.

from Shaanxi and Hebei provinces. These two regions, already dry, were required to pump clean water to Beijing in time for the Olympics.²¹

In preparation for the Olympics in Beijing, a spotlight was also placed on the city's air quality. The European Satellite Agency published a report in September 2005 listing Beijing as having the world's highest levels of nitrogen dioxide, a smog gas originating from power plants, heavy industry and vehicle emissions. This gas can cause fatal lung damage and was found to have increased by 50 percent in China's air since 1996.²²

In an effort to combat these gases, and improve air quality for the athletes, 100 factories have been relocated outside of Beijing. Additionally, 30,000 taxis have been replaced with less polluting vehicles.²³ Even with these measures, air quality in the city was only considered "good" two thirds of the year in 2006.²⁴

There were also human rights issues. One was violence in Tibet. Western reports coming from China are varied, but reporters agree that the Chinese military and police used harsh methods to suppress the Tibetan protesters. Estimates of those killed by both sides range from 22 to 140.²⁵ The PRC also censored foreign press coverage of the episode. An American documentary crew was forcibly removed from its hotel and sent to film in a new location to prevent it from filming the violence in the region.²⁶

5. Elements of Soft Power

The force of the Olympic Games as a medium of political influence in international relations is as an aspect of "soft power." Joseph Nye defines "soft power"

²¹ "Olympics 'Threat to Water Supply,'" CNN.com, February 27, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7266681.stm>

²² Antoaneta Bezlova, "China: Race to Improve Air Quality for 2008 Olympics," *IPSnews*, December 4, 2007, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32097>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007.

²⁵ "Tibet Speaker: Dalai Lama Not Behind Riots," CNN.com, March 30, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/03/30/china.tibet.ap/index.html>.

²⁶ "American Film Crew Kept from China Protests," CNN.com, March 17, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/03/17/tibet.american/>.

as the ability of one country to get “other countries to want what it wants.”²⁷ According to Nye, soft power relies not on the threats and coercion of hard power, but instead provides incentives for cooperation. It relies on the power of shared ideas to make policies seem legitimate. The core of soft power is the ability to influence opinion based on shared culture, institutions, and ideology. In order to make use of soft power, policy makers must be able to influence other nations at this core.

Another aspect of successful use of soft culture, according to Nye, is the “universality of culture.”²⁸ In this context, it is not necessarily the common aspects of a nation’s cultural history that define shared ideology, but the attractiveness of a single nation’s culture. According to this theory, when non-American citizens buy American clothes, music, or food products, it increases America’s soft power by increasing interest in its culture. The more attractive a nation finds your culture, the more likely it is to cooperate at the institutional level.

Nye further explains that soft power is essential to the survival of the hegemony of the United States. He states that Washington is in danger of squandering the soft power gains made through increased universality of American culture by acting too independently and arrogantly on the world stage. This impact can be lessened when the United States exercises restraint in using its power in regards to its allies. American restraint contributes to its soft power by providing incentive for other nations to cooperate with the United States.²⁹

In reviewing Nye’s work, Peter J. Spiro agrees with Nye’s assessment of American soft power. “In the short run, foreign policy will continue to be contested largely through traditional governmental channels. In the long run, the mechanisms of global governance may render the very notion of foreign policy an artifact of a particular

²⁷ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 80, Twentieth Anniversary (Autumn 1990), 166.

²⁸ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Limits of American Power,” *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol. 117, No. 4. (Winter 2002-2003), 545-559.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 545-559.

stage of historical development.”³⁰ In other words, soft power as a tool of foreign policy will eventually become obsolete, but it is currently the best solution available. Spiro believes that Nye’s practical application of soft power presents the most plausible and effective foreign policy solution.

Another explanation of power, as offered by Niall Ferguson, places an emphasis on the material aspects of power. He refutes Nye’s claims that an attractive culture could cause other nations to conduct more favorable relations with the United States. He cites the example of British colonies in the 19th century. They were the most anglicized of these colonies which were the first to revolt against British Rule. This leads Ferguson to conclude that soft power is in fact too soft to be effective.³¹ His argument is limited to these colonies and thus has limited support. His explanation of soft power is given at the individual level and is therefore of little application to arguments at the state level.

While it is a challenge to deploy the idea of soft power in actual policy making, it is my contention that the Olympics provide an ideal opportunity to do so. It is essential that the international community engage the PRC on questions of human rights, security, and economic stability. It is rare to have the ideal set of circumstances to magnify the impact of public diplomacy to this scale and it is important that the opportunity not be wasted.

6. Future Olympic Host Cities

The next three post-Beijing Olympic cities have already been selected: the 2010 winter Games in Vancouver, the 2012 summer Games in London, and the 2014 winter Games in Sochi, Russia. While the Vancouver Games will be the third Olympics hosted by Canada, it is the first in the province of British Columbia, and it is already not without controversy.³² Opposition to the 2010 Vancouver Games has already been expressed by

³⁰ Peter J. Spiro, “Review of *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower can’t Go It Alone* by Joseph S. Nye, Jr.” *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol. 97, No. 3. (July 2003), 731-734.

³¹ Niall Ferguson, “Power.” *Foreign Policy*. No. 134, (Jan. – Feb., 2003), 18-22+24.

³² International Olympic Committee, Election, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/vancouver/election_uk.asp, March 20, 2008.

hundreds of activists and politicians. The estimated taxpayer expense to host the Games is two billion Canadian dollars and expected to increase.³³ The construction is also anticipated to cause a loss of affordable housing.

The 2012 London Games have so far been met with significantly less controversy. London will be the first city to have host the modern Games of three Olympiads, and it remains the only city in the United Kingdom to host them.³⁴ Having been the victim of terrorist attacks in the recent past, it will fight hard to prevent becoming a symbol for fanatics. Security is expected to be its foremost concern. In addition, London already faces serious congestion that will only increase, with attendant environmental impact of hosting the Games.

The next city to host is the most unexpected. Sochi is a small Russian resort town on the northwestern coast of the Black Sea. Since this is Russia's first time hosting the Winter Olympics, it will be a major event. Additionally, \$580 million will be spent on construction and modernization of telecommunications in the region. By 2011, there will be construction and improvement of four power stations and four cascaded hydroelectric power stations with total output of 1129 MW. The cost of operating these plants is expected to be approximately 83.6 billion rubles (\$3.2 billion). A further 115 billion rubles are expected to be spent on the transportation infrastructure.³⁵

While this will create a marked improvement in the area's infrastructure as a whole, it is still controversial. A minority ethnic group in this region--the Circassians--is a small group, but they point out that the 2014 Olympic Games will mark the 150th anniversary of the Circassians' defeat by Russia in 1864.³⁶ Many would phrase this defeat as genocide. Circassians further note that the Russian Government currently bans and prevents local inhabitants from visiting many of the tourist and mountainous areas of

³³ "Vancouver Olympics Already Stirring Controversy," *The Epoch Times*, <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/6-3-17/39416.html>, March 17, 2008.

³⁴ International Olympic Committee, Election, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/london/index_uk.asp, February 20, 2008.

³⁵ "The Spoils and Concerns of a Sochi Olympics," Stratfor, http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical_diary_spoils_and_concerns_sochi_olympics (accessed March 10, 2008).

³⁶ "Circassians Voice Olympic Anger," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, http://iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=339641&apc_state=henpcrs (accessed February 23, 2008).

the region that they live in. Many of these areas are also protected as a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites. This will be the first time in history that Olympic facilities have been approved to be built on natural UNESCO World Heritage sites.³⁷

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

The use of the Olympic Games as a tool for soft power presents an ideal opportunity for a case study. Taking a historical and political approach to the study of the Olympics, this thesis focuses on the selection process, economic impact, national and international consequences, as well as an overall impact on human rights. It not only focuses on the impact of national policy changes, but on the opinion and actions of the international community in providing a catalyst for national political change.

Materials for this research include books, press reports, and journals. Secondary sources provide a historical account of political change, requirements for hosting, and financial and environmental consequences caused by Olympic Games. Primary sources evaluate the impact of the Beijing Games on China. They also detail the opinion of the international community and subsequent policy change in China.

³⁷ “Circassians Voice Olympic Anger,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, http://iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=339641&apc_state=henpcrs (accessed February 23, 2008).

II. HISTORICAL BASIS FOR EXPECTATION OF CHANGE

A. IMPORTANCE TO HOST NATION

The International Olympic Committee's longevity is due to its ability to convince cities that the bid, and subsequent acceptance of the Games, benefits both the nation and the host city. The IOC suggests that a host nation will see improvements in its economy, national pride, and environmental health.³⁸ The actual result, however, has often been mixed and difficult to measure.

1. Economic

The majority of Olympic Bid and Planning Committees use the possible economic benefits as the impetus to host the Olympic Games. These committees use this argument to convince citizens that the initial cost of the Games will be offset by the income created by construction, tourism, and advertising during the Games. The IOC is not responsible for any of the costs incurred by the host city in executing the Olympics.³⁹ As such, the citizens of each city will see a tax increase as well as a depletion of public funds in reserve.

Simply applying to bid for the Games cost a nation's Olympic committee \$150,000.⁴⁰ Once a bid is accepted, the nominated city must create a bid package which includes plans for infrastructure, security, environmental protection, Olympic theme, and citizen opinions. Each of these reports is generated at the city's expense. In addition to the official costs of the bid process, most nations spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in "extra" expenses to help convince members of the International Olympic Committee

³⁸ International Olympic Committee, Development Through Sport, http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/humanitarian/tool_uk.asp, September 2008.

³⁹ Jeffrey G. Owen, "Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?" *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1, November 2008.

⁴⁰ Sharon K. Hom, "The Promise of a 'People's Olympics'," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 61.

that its candidate city is the best. With the overall cost of hosting the Games now exceeding the two billion dollar mark⁴¹, citizens are wondering how public funds will be replenished once the Games have ended. Most economic impact plans lay out three ways in which income will be generated as a result of hosting a mega-sporting event: infrastructure improvement, income from tourism, and corporate sponsorship.⁴²

First, the IOC may suggest that a city's infrastructure be greatly improved. In order to be accepted for a bid, a city must have sound sports and housing facilities, as well as a functioning system of transportation.⁴³ In cities where these services already exist, the improvement cost is limited and may lead to much needed revitalization of certain areas of the city. In cities where these services do not exist, such as Beijing, the cost of creating this infrastructure is staggering.

It was estimated that investments on venues and non-sports infrastructure in Beijing would be \$14 billion.⁴⁴ The amount that Beijing spent on new venues for the Games was significantly higher than any previous Olympic event. This can partially be explained by the city's lack of development in comparison to previous host cities such as Atlanta, Moscow, and Los Angeles. Of the total infrastructure improvements, approximately 13 percent is estimated to have been spent on sports venues and the Olympic Village. Of the 37 planned facilities, 16 were new and 18 required updates. Nearly two-thirds of Beijing's Olympic budget was slated to go towards environmental protection. These funds were applied in the areas of air quality, water conservation, waste disposal, clean energy development, and "greening up" of the landscape. Transportation

⁴¹ Sharon K. Hom, "The Promise of a 'People's Olympics,'" in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 67.

⁴² Jeffrey G. Owen, "Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?" *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1, November 2008.

⁴³ Sharon K. Hom, "The Promise of a 'People's Olympics,'" in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 61.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey G. Owen, "Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?," *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1, November, 2008.

improvements were included as part of the environmental improvements, as they intended to expand public transportation and convert buses to clean energy prior to the Games.⁴⁵

The Moscow Games had approximately a quarter of the 300,000 expected visitors. The cost of improving the infrastructure in preparation for these visitors was not detailed outside of the Soviet Union. Infrastructure improvements included Lenin Stadium, 69 other sports facilities, construction of hotels and the improvement of the Metro System. At the time, Moscow mayor Vladimir F. Promyslov stated that the city had spent "about \$ 2 billion on the Games."⁴⁶

In contrast, the Los Angeles Games made over \$200 million. The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) relied on existing facilities and therefore constructed very little. Much of its success can also be attributed to the over \$700 million received from television rights, commercial sponsorship and ticket sales. The total cost of the Games was \$500 million.⁴⁷

The total cost of the Seoul Games was nearly \$4 billion. The initial profit was calculated at \$139 million. That figure rises to almost \$500 million when apartment sales of Olympic Housing are factored in.⁴⁸

Second, the income generated from tourism is extensive. Between the estimated 580,000 journalists and spectators who were expected to attend the Beijing Games, the city hoped to see millions of dollars injected back into the city's economy.⁴⁹ Had controversy or serious tragedy occurred during the Games, these numbers would have

⁴⁵ Jeffrey G. Owen, "Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?," *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;coll, November, 2008.

⁴⁶ Frank Zarnowski, "A Look At Olympic Costs," *International Journal of Olympic History*, Vol 1, Number 2, Spring (1993).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sharon K. Hom, "The Promise of a 'People's Olympics'," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 70.

fallen drastically. Relying on money from tourism leaves much of the efforts to recover the Olympic investment to chance and an increased security budget.

Tourism during the Games is no indication of continued tourism, however. Beijing attempted to encourage long-term tourism by improving both the environment and communications technology available within the city. In 2004, Beijing boasted 458 hotels with 84,812 rooms. The goal was to ensure that there would be "so many hotel rooms that tourists visiting the city will have no trouble finding a place that suits their specific needs". In order to attain that goal by 2008, Beijing planned to have 800 hotels with 130,000 rooms.⁵⁰ If the growth of tourism does not match the growth of development for tourism, the cost of development will not be recouped. It is probable that any positive image garnered from the Games will lead to an increase in long term tourism. In fact, domestic tourism to Beijing has already increased since the end of the Games.⁵¹

Finally, the most easily measured economic benefit of the Olympics are corporate sponsorship and media rights. Any items that do not bear the Olympic logo may not be seen at the Games.⁵² The income generated from these marketed items will be returned to the city. It is essential that the logo and mascots for the Games are attractive for the public and not readily counterfeited, in order for a city to achieve a profitable event. The Beijing Olympic Committee stated that the cost of the Beijing Olympics would be covered entirely by marketing costs.

Media coverage of the event is highly sought after in the lead up to the Games. Broadcasting companies from each nation must negotiate to obtain a contract to distribute the Games from the IOC. While the IOC was expected to receive 1.7 billion dollars for

⁵⁰ Jeffrey G. Owen, "Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?," *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;coll, November, 2008.

⁵¹ "Poll: Beijing Most Popular Tourist Site After the Olympics," en.beijing2008.cn, August 24, 2008, <http://en.beijing2008.cn/news/olympiccities/beijing/n214580849.shtml>.

⁵² *At Issue: The Olympics*, ed. Tamara L. Roleff (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 26.

broadcasting rights,⁵³ the host nation can only hope for positive coverage, which can lead to greater long-term tourism and foreign investment.

The true economic impact of the Beijing Games will not be seen for several years. Analysts must have time to measure the utility of the newly formed infrastructure and the increase in tourism over time. If previous Olympic Games are any indication, there is a strong likelihood that the massive cost of the Beijing Olympics will be recouped not by infrastructure improvements or an increase in foreign tourists, but the income generated from successful marketing.

2. Nationalism

As previously discussed, many nations use the Olympics as a boost to individual patriotism, national pride, and international image. While this is a sentiment which the IOC encourages, it directly counters its stated desire for apolitical sporting events. When a nation uses athletes to prove superiority over other nations, it is simply politics, or warfare, by other means. Some believe that if the Games were truly separate from national politics, the medalists would not stand beneath the nation's flag to receive their medals.⁵⁴

Having said that, one must ask how much the Olympic Games contribute to national pride. According to those who sought to boycott the 1936 Berlin Games, it can be a major factor. Hitler sought to glorify his improved "Aryan nation" by successfully hosting the Olympic Games. Germany won a staggering 89 medals with the United States coming in second with only 56. The success of Germany's athletes was hailed as a testament to the superiority of his Aryan athletes.⁵⁵ In hindsight, this was a great failure on the part of the Olympic committee to remove the nomination from a host city. The success of the Berlin Games increased German nationalism to extremely high levels and added credence to Hitler's plan for a master race.

⁵³ Arvind Ganesan, "The Race for Profits," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 197.

⁵⁴ *At Issue: The Olympics*, ed. Tamara L. Roleff (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 30.

⁵⁵ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 61-63.

Nationalism can be seen in a more positive light. The 1960 Tokyo Games were hailed as the evidence that Japan and her people had not only recovered from the events of World War II, but excelled in its aftermath. It marked the first Olympics to be awarded to an Asian nation.⁵⁶ While Japanese athletes came in a far third in the medal count behind the United States and the Soviet Union, the Games were still a success. These Games marked the first sporting event to be broadcast live across the Pacific.⁵⁷

When Beijing was awarded the Games in 2001, a massive celebration was held in Tiananmen Square. President Jiang Zemin told the crowd of tens of thousands that, “Winning the host rights means winning the respect, trust, and favor of the international community.”⁵⁸ The Games provided China’s leaders with an opportunity to show the nation’s rise as a great power, but also a peaceful one.

Since China was awarded the Games, international criticism has been voiced loudly via a variety of media outlets. The outcome was not a nation which bowed to pressure, but one that is indignant at being judged by Western media. On April 19th approximately 2,000 Chinese citizens took to the streets in several cities to chant patriotic slogans.⁵⁹ As a result of continued support for the Dalai Lama, the willingness of president Nicolas Sarkozy to boycott the Games, and the treatment of the Olympic torch bearer, France has come under a great deal of fire. In fact the French retail chain, Carrefour, was been threatened with boycott following the poor treatment of the Olympic torch bearer in Paris.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ International Olympic Committee. Tokyo, 1964, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/innovations_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1964, August, 2008.

⁵⁷ Paul Droubie, “Japan’s Rebirth at the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics,” About Japan: A Teacher’s Resource, http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/japans_rebirth_at_the_1964_tokyo_summer, July 31, 2008.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, “China’s Olympic Nightmare: What the Games Mean for Beijing’s Future,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2008), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080701faessay87403/elizabeth-c-economy-adam-segal/china-s-olympic-nightmare.html>.

⁵⁹ “Manage That Anger,” *The Economist*, April 26, 2008, 58.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

3. Environmental

Beijing saw the Olympic Games as an opportunity to make the city more “green.”⁶¹ Beijing’s current environmental situation is so grim that many athletes were concerned for their respiratory health while competing. In fact, members of the American cycling team arrived in Beijing wearing protective safety masks.⁶²

According to the Beijing Olympic Committee, ensuring that the Olympics were green was one of its top priorities.⁶³ Environmental protection is a key prerequisite for designing and constructing the Olympic Games' facilities, while strict ecological standards and systematic guarantee systems were established. They promised to concentrate on urban and rural afforestation and environmental protection, as well as promote awareness among the general public. Additionally, they encouraged citizens and visitors to make environmentally sound consumption choices to “help better the capital's ecological standards and build a city better fit for all to enjoy.”⁶⁴

B. HISTORY OF CONTROVERSY

1. Selection Process

The Olympic Games in Salt Lake City brought to light many illegal practices that nations were using in order to persuade the IOC to accept their bids. It was found that officials were receiving bribes in the form of lavish dinners, all-expense paid family

⁶¹ Jeffrey G. Owen, “Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?,” *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1, November, 2008.

⁶² “U.S. Cyclists are Masked, and Criticism is Not,” *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/sports/olympics/06masks.html?_r=1 (accessed August 6, 2008).

⁶³ Jeffrey G. Owen, “Estimating the Cost and Benefit of Hosting Olympic Games: What Can Beijing Expect from Its 2008 Games?,” *The Industrial Geographer*, Fall, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4127/is_200510/ai_n15705690/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1, November, 2008.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

vacations, and the tuition of children.⁶⁵ While the Salt Lake City Games were a shining example of corruption, this was not the first or last instance of buying favor during the selection process.

As a result of this scandal, the IOC completely changed the bidding process in order to curtail future abuses. The bid now consists of a two-phase process which takes approximately two years. During the first phase, application, the city requesting to stage the Games must be put forward to the IOC by its National Olympic Committee via letter. After which the city becomes an “applicant city.” Each city will remain an applicant for roughly ten months. During which time, they are required to answer a questionnaire which provides the IOC with the city’s plan to host the Olympic Games.⁶⁶

Once these questionnaires are reviewed, the IOC will release the list of “Candidate Cities.” The candidate cities proceed to phase two. At this point, the cities must submit a candidature file and a site inspection will be conducted by the IOC. The IOC Executive Board will then create a list of finalist cities for the vote. Members of the voting committee are encouraged to make their assessment of the host city’s ability to host the Games based on the candidature file vice personal feelings or favors received.⁶⁷

The more controlled process did not prevent French President, Jacques Chirac, from expending more than 30 million dollars in order to secure the 2012 Games for Paris.⁶⁸ Even though this sum is vast, it did not guarantee the French Bid. The Games were awarded to London. In a world of elitism and politics via sport, it is no surprise that many suspect the close ties of the United States and England to have been the deciding factor in awarding the 2012 Games.

⁶⁵ Frank Ching, “From Mao to Now: Three Tumultuous Decades,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 53.

⁶⁶ Sharon K. Hom, “The Promise of a ‘People’s Olympics’,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 61.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁶⁸ Dave Zirin, “The Ghosts of Olympics Past,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 79-80.

2. Environmental Impact

The environmental impact of the Olympic Games is largely dependent on two factors. First, the amount of infrastructure that must be built to host the Games. If a city already has adequate housing and sporting venues, construction will be minimal. Additionally, if the transportation system is sufficient to handle the thousands of tourists, athletes, and journalists who will descend upon the city, limited transportation construction will be required.

The next major contributor to environmental impact is the increase of people within the city. The addition of thousands of people significantly increases water consumption, waste production, and carbon dioxide emissions within the city. In a city like Beijing, which is already overcrowded, these increases further deteriorate a grim air and water quality situation.

In order to mitigate these concerns, China's Olympic Committee took many steps to improve the environment in Beijing and other cities in which events are being conducted. First, all vending machines provided by Coca Cola for the Games contained natural refrigerants which did not contain hydrofluorocarbons. These systems improved the efficiency of each vending machine by 30 percent.⁶⁹

As the Olympics in Beijing approached, a spotlight was placed on the city's air quality. The European Satellite Agency published a report in September 2005, listing Beijing as having the world's highest levels of nitrogen dioxide, a smog gas originating from power plants, heavy industry and vehicle emissions. This gas can cause fatal lung damage and was found to have increased by 50 percent in China's air since 1996.⁷⁰

In an effort to combat these gases, and improve air quality for the athletes, 100 factories have been relocated outside of Beijing. Additionally, 30,000 taxis have been

⁶⁹ News Blaze, "Smaller Carbon Footprint Earns High Marks for 'eKOfresh' Coolers at Beijing 2008 Olympic Games," newsblaze.com, <http://newsblaze.com/story/2008082308430300001.pnw/topstory.html> (accessed August 30, 2008).

⁷⁰ Antoaneta Bezlova, "China: Race to Improve Air Quality for 2008 Olympics," *IPSnews*, December 4, 2007, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32097>.

replaced with less polluting vehicles.⁷¹ Even with these measures, air quality in the city was only considered “good” two-thirds of the year in 2006.⁷²

C. UNSUCCESSFUL USE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

1. Melbourne, 1956

In 1956, the Summer Olympics were held in Melbourne, Australia. Many nations attempted to use the Games as an opportunity to make political statements. Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon refused to participate in response to the Suez War. They did not want to share an event with Israel, the United Kingdom, and France after those nations staged an invasion of Egypt. In addition, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland withdrew from the Games in order to protest the Soviet response to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Finally, the People’s Republic of China boycotted the Games when the Republic of China was allowed to compete as “Formosa.”⁷³

Amid all of this political turmoil, Avery Brudage (President of the IOC, 1952-1972) insisted that the Games would proceed as planned. The IOC went further in censoring those nations who refused to participate in the Melbourne Games, “The International Olympic Committee, an organization concerned only with sports, expresses its sadness and regret at the abstentions, which it considers contrary to the Olympic ideals.”⁷⁴ While the Melbourne Olympics were generally considered a success, the boycotting nations reduced the number of participating athletes relative to the previous and successive Summer Games. In 1952, Helsinki hosted 69 nations and 4,955

⁷¹ Antoaneta Bezlova, “China: Race to Improve Air Quality for 2008 Olympics,” *IPSnews*, December 4, 2007, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32097>.

⁷² Carin Zissis, “China’s Environmental Crisis,” *CFR.org*, October 21, 2007.

⁷³ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 105-107.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

athletes.⁷⁵ The 1960 Games, held in Rome boasted 83 nations and 5,338 athletes.⁷⁶ While Melbourne's 72 nations are approximately equal, the number of athletes was significantly lower at 3,314.⁷⁷

2. Mexico City, 1968

On October 2, 1968, more than 200 students were massacred by the Mexican military in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, while thousands more were jailed. The students were protesting social conditions in Mexico, as well as the \$200 million price tag of the Olympic Games. They were expecting to have an increase in publicity with which to push their issues, instead they found themselves being brutally silenced. Official reports at the time stated that only 30 killed and a few hundred injured.⁷⁸

Before the Games, several international conflicts impacted the athletes and planners of the event. First, the IOC Executive Board recommended that the invitation to compete in the Games be revoked from South Africa, as a result of their continued policy of apartheid. Second, black athletes in America were threatening to compete under a new flag, vice the American flag.

Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., a group led by Harry Edwards stated that, "We are not Americans, we are black people."⁷⁹ In a compromise, black athletes agreed to stand under the American flag, but still make a statement regarding race if they were to win. The lesser known of these statements was to wear black gloves in the event that they had to shake the hand of Avery Brundage.⁸⁰ They felt

⁷⁵ International Olympic Committee, Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1952, August 4, 2008.

⁷⁶ International Olympic Committee, Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1960, August 4, 2008.

⁷⁷ International Olympic Committee, Olympic Games, http://www.olympic.org/uk/Games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1956, August 4, 2008.

⁷⁸ Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, *Inside the Olympic Industry: Power, Politics, and Activism* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000), 109-110.

⁷⁹ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 136-137.

⁸⁰ Dave Zirin, "The Ghosts of Olympics Past," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 74.

was a racist based on his consistent support for Hitler's Berlin Games, as well as the segregated South African team. These black gloves were made famous when Tommie Smith and John Carlos wore them to demonstrate the black power salute following the 200-meter event. Brundage suspended Smith and Carlos from the U.S. team and banned them from the Olympic Village, but the Games continued as planned.⁸¹

3. Montreal, 1976

Twenty-eight African nations boycotted the 1976 Summer Olympics held in Montreal. The boycott came following the IOC's refusal to ban New Zealand from participating in the Games. Earlier that year, New Zealand's all black rugby team toured apartheid ruled South Africa, who was still banned from competing in IOC hosted events.⁸² Both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China boycotted the Games since each nation wanted the IOC to respect their legitimacy.⁸³ Again, the success of the 1976 Olympics were relatively unaffected by these controversies.

4. Moscow, 1980

The Moscow Games were marred by the largest single boycott in Olympic history. The United States led 36 nations in refusing to attend the 1980 Games. The boycott was in response to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Some athletes competed under an Olympic vice national flag in order to participate in the Games.⁸⁴

The American-led boycott was met with mixed success. While the message of disapproval for Soviet actions was clear, Soviet troops did not leave Afghanistan and the

⁸¹ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 137.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 166.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 164-166.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

Russians went on to break multiple world and Olympic records.⁸⁵ Even though they had just been readmitted into the International Olympic Committee, the PRC also chose to join the American boycott.⁸⁶

5. Los Angeles, 1984

In response to the American led boycott of the Moscow Games, the Soviet Union led a boycott of her allies. These nations stated that they could not attend based on security concerns amid an anti-Soviet Union environment.⁸⁷ Even amidst this international turbulence, the Los Angeles Games proceeded and made a profit of 215 million dollars.⁸⁸

D. SUCCESSFUL USE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

1. Seoul

The only Olympic Games in which international political pressure directly impacted the method by which a nation was governed occurred in 1988. Massive student protests led many in the IOC to seek to send the Olympic Games to a new city. In order to prevent the embarrassment and financial waste that would be associated with losing the Games, the government appeared to give in to the protesters. In an unprecedented move by an Olympic Host Nation, democracy was established just before the 1988 Seoul Games.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 184-185.

⁸⁶ Liu Xiaobo, "Authoritarianism in the Light of the Olympic Flame," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 265.

⁸⁷ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 197-200.

⁸⁸ *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2012.*, ed. John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold (New York: Routledge, 2007), 103.

⁸⁹ Richard Pound, "Olympian Changes: Seoul and Beijing," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 87-89.

What is neglected in this brief synopsis are the many other preconditions that were present in South Korea, which led to a shift to democracy. First, the move was not entirely peaceful. Some students reported being clubbed and imprisoned by South Korean forces. Second, South Korea's government was already in a state of transition following the awarding of the bid. Before the student protests began, there was an assassination attempt on the president as well as a military coup. Finally, the newly formed middle class had an increased desire for social change and freedom of expression. While the military run government was not completely opposed to change, they wanted it to come about in a gradual and controlled manner.⁹⁰

The conditions, which precipitated the South Korean shift to democracy, do not exist in China. The Chinese government is not involved in a transition of leadership type. Additionally, the Chinese population is largely satisfied with their system of government and there is little widespread demand for change in Beijing. Finally, the Chinese government is less seeking to prove their importance to the international community as to showcase it.⁹¹ For these reasons, it is unlikely that the massive political change in South Korea can be used as a predictor for change in China as a result of the Beijing Olympics.

⁹⁰ Richard Pound, "Olympian Changes: Seoul and Beijing," in *China's Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympic Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 89.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

III. THE 2008 OLYMPICS: WHY BEIJING?

The selection of Beijing to host the 2008 Olympic Games was a controversial one. Beijing was initially denied the 2000 Games in the wake of the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989.⁹² The images of unarmed students and workers being killed by the Chinese military were too fresh in the eyes of the international community. What changed in the following years to convince the International Olympic Committee that Beijing was now the right choice? Both China's position in the global community and the Olympic Committee's vision for host cities.

China is amongst the most rapidly growing economies in the world. During the current global economic down turn, their massive reserves have allowed them to maintain a stable economy in turbulent times.⁹³ In addition to its massive economic influence, China has become an influential member of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Diplomatically and economically, China is showing their ability to act as a world power. Part of the goal of the Olympics is to increase a nation's soft power. In order to accomplish this, the nation's culture and image must be attractive to other nations. The areas in which China lacks this soft power provide the reasons for which Beijing's selection as host city was contentious. The following sections detail why Beijing was a controversial choice.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

While China's gross domestic product (GDP) increased nearly eleven percent in 2006, attempts to reverse ecosystem damage cost approximately nine percent of GDP.⁹⁴ Additionally, 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China.⁹⁵ China continues to

⁹² Xu Guog, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1895-2008* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 232-237.

⁹³ "Top Economist Suggest China 'Slightly Increase' Dollar Reserve." ChinaView.cn, November 22, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-11/22/content_10397675.htm (accessed November 25, 2008).

⁹⁴ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

seek economic growth and recognition in the world market, but they will not be able to sustain this level of growth if they are not able to stem the tide of pollution.

1. Water Pollution

One third of China's population lacks clean drinking water, with the per capita water supply only one quarter of the global average.⁹⁶ Exacerbating the problem is that 70 percent of China's rivers are polluted and 80 percent of its major tributaries no longer support fish.⁹⁷ This vast pollution is the result of 200 million tons of sewage and industrial waste being dumped into the rivers in 2004.⁹⁸ China's lack of water is not just a result of pollution, but a geographic fact of life. The Northwest regions of China lack the lakes and rivers that flow through the rest of the nation. In addition, they receive very little rain fall.

In an attempt to combat the aridity in some regions of China, major projects have been undertaken to construct 25,000 dams.⁹⁹ Sadly, these projects have done much more damage than China's experts predicted, resulting in loss of farmland, ecological damage, and forced migration. The most prominent example of this is the Three Gorges Dam Project. In addition to providing irrigation for arid lands, it was intended to provide a reduction of flooding downstream, carbon free power, and a navigation friendly reservoir.¹⁰⁰

The Three Gorges Dam project is part of the South-North Water Transfer Project which, when complete in 2050, will consist of three water transfer lines: West (250 miles), Middle (775 miles), and East (772 miles). Between these three lines, 44 billion cubic meters of water will be diverted to the North each year. At a cost of 25 billion

⁹⁶ "Environmental Performance Review of China: Conclusions and Recommendations." OECD.org, October 21, 2007, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/23/37657409.pdf

⁹⁷ Cynthia W. Cann, Michael C. Cann and Gao Shangquan, "China's Road to Sustainable Development," in *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development* ed. Kristen A. Day (Armonk, New York: Columbia University, 2005), 6.

⁹⁸ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "One Dam Thing After Another," *The Economist*, November 3, 2007.

dollars, it is the most ambitious dam project the world has ever seen.¹⁰¹ Since the construction began, 1.4 million people have been displaced and hundreds of thousands more are expected to be relocated because of erosion and landslides which have resulted in waves up to 165 feet.¹⁰²

2. Desertification

China's limited water supply will only grow worse as the desert continues to encroach on rural and urban areas. Almost 6,000 square miles of grassland are lost each year as a result of excessive farm cultivation, especially over-grazing.¹⁰³ Desertification is not just a concern for those without water or fertile land for agriculture. Desertification is the cause of one-third of China's air pollution. The arid lands have given rise to an unprecedented number of sandstorms. One hundred sandstorms were expected between 2000 and 2009. This estimation is four times that of the previous decade.¹⁰⁴

Many experts claim that eliminating sandstorms in China is impossible. In April this year, Liu Tuo, Director of China's National Bureau to Combat Desertification under the State Forestry Administration, stated that sand storms originate not just from desertified regions of northern China (1.74 million square kilometers), but also from foreign sand sources. As such, technical conditions (interpreted as political concerns) prevent the reclamation of desertified lands. He further states that, while the sandy days are more frequent this year than in years past, they are still within normal expected ranges.¹⁰⁵ This resistance to accepting responsibility for desertified lands is characteristic of many nations attempting to pass blame to the international community.

The case of the Aibi Lake offers further evidence of desertification. Once 1200 square meters in size, Xinjiang's largest salt lake has been reduced to only 500 square kilometers. The drying of the lake has produced desert land surrounding the lake which

¹⁰¹ "One Dam Thing After Another," *The Economist*, November 3, 2007.

¹⁰² "One Dam Thing After Another," *The Economist*, November 3, 2007.

¹⁰³ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "Lake Shrinks, Desert Expands," December 2, 2007, www.china.org.cn/english/environment/233972.htm.

is expanding at the rate of approximately 40 square meters a year. As the water in the lake evaporates, the salt content becomes more concentrated, meaning that less of the water can be used for irrigation or converted to drinking water. Of 385 species of plants native to the lake, only 322 remain. The sandstorm weather in this region has grown from 13 days in the 1960s, to 110 days a year.¹⁰⁶

3. Air Pollution

As a result of air pollution, China has the highest occurrence of respiratory illness of any nation in the world. The leading causes of air pollution in China are automobile traffic, coal, and desertification. Since desertification is addressed above, I will only discuss the current impact of traffic and coal burning in this section. The quality of fuel in China's passenger vehicles is low, meaning that it is high in sulfur content that leads to acid rain. There are 16 million cars currently on China's roads, and the number of vehicles on the road has doubled since 2000. Conversely, the number of bike routes has decreased to make room for more roads and the efficiency of public transportation has been reduced.¹⁰⁷

China is expected to become the world's largest consumer of energy by 2010.¹⁰⁸ Coal is China's primary energy source, providing more than two-thirds of China's energy. Since it is the cheapest source of fuel, it is difficult to convince energy companies to convert to fuel sources with a smaller carbon footprint. Coal produces sulfur dioxide which results in acid rain. Currently acid rain falls on 30% of China.¹⁰⁹ At the current rate of coal consumption, China is expected to become the largest emitter of greenhouse gases by 2009.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ "Lake Shrinks, Desert Expands," December 2, 2007, www.china.org.cn/english/environment/233972.htm.

¹⁰⁷ Antoaneta Bezlova, "China: Race to Improve Air Quality for 2008 Olympics," *IPSnews*, December 4, 2007, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32097>.

¹⁰⁸ "China 'To Be Largest Energy User'," BBC.co.uk, December 2, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/7082475.stm>.

¹⁰⁹ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007. http://www.cfr.org/publication/12608/chinas_environmental_crisis.html.

¹¹⁰ Carin Zissis, "China's Environmental Crisis," CFR.org, October 21, 2007. http://www.cfr.org/publication/12608/chinas_environmental_crisis.html.

4. Social Results of Pollution

In the village of Daqing, ten children, from a population of less than 4,000, have been born with Minamata Syndrome, which was misdiagnosed as cerebral palsy by local doctors. Since this kind of clustering is not usual with cerebral palsy, it was determined that the children were suffering from Minamata Syndrome, as a result of mercury exposure in the womb. The Hongwei Petrochemical Park is located just outside of Daqing. In 2003, the local government acknowledged the disease was a result of pollution and promised to relocate the villagers to a less dangerous location. As of September 29, 2007, no villagers had been relocated.¹¹¹

In another example of industry poisoning a village, the very small town of Liangqiao has come to be known as a “cancer village.” Cancer has become the leading cause of death in China. The cancer rate is 137 in 100,000 people. In the town of Liangqiao, this number is much higher. Twenty-eight people, in a village that is only 400 strong, have died of cancer in the last ten years. The villagers claim that the high cancer rate is due to the untreated water that flows from an iron-ore mine 35 miles upstream. The water used by the villagers for irrigating their crops comes from this river, which is high in arsenic and cadmium. Doctors have advised citizens to move, but many cannot afford to do so.¹¹²

B. HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Beijing’s Promises

When the Olympic Games were awarded to China, Beijing’s Vice Mayor, Liu Jingmin, stated that Beijing wanted the Games “to promote not just the city’s development, but the development of society, including democracy and human rights.”¹¹³ In the weeks following the Olympic Games, it is clear that these promises were not kept.

¹¹¹ The Economist, “Something in the Air?,” September 29, 2007.

¹¹² “Tibet Speaker: Dalai Lama Not Behind Riots,” CNN.com, March 30, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/03/30/china.tibet.ap/index.html>.

¹¹³ Sally Jenkins, “Human Rights, and Wrongs,” WashingtonPost.com, February 22, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/21/AR2008022102695.html> (accessed November 22, 2008).

In hindsight, it is easy to say that the IOC should have realized that the Olympics could not change the human rights abuses rife in a government with a weak judicial system. If there is no enforcement, there can be little hope of improvement. Even so, the IOC hoped that their involvement would lead to an improvement in human rights.¹¹⁴

Major areas in which China lacks basic human rights are press freedom, the death penalty, and arbitrary detention. As part of their Olympic Bid, the Beijing Olympic Committee submitted a package that included promises to improve human rights. While the Host City Contract detailing these promises has not been released to the public, there were several areas where Beijing ensured improvement: “use of the death penalty; arbitrary detention; abusive forms of administrative detention; the arbitrary detention, imprisonment, ill-treatment and harassment of human rights defenders, including journalists and lawyers; and the censorship of the internet.”¹¹⁵

In preparation for the Olympic Games, two elderly women, Wu Dianyuan and Wang Xiuying, petitioned to protest in a designated area in Beijing during the Olympics. The women were protesting the meager compensation they received when their homes were seized for urban redevelopment of Beijing. Instead of receiving a license to protest, both women were given the extra-judicial sentence of “re-education through labor.” The two women were informed by police that their sentence would be commuted if they would promise to stay at home during the Olympics and stop asking for permission to protest.¹¹⁶

Wu and Wang are not the first citizens to be detained, or simply disappear, after petitioning the government to protest. Some human rights activists charge that the application process was only set up to lure protesters out so that they could be silenced during the Games. Four days before the Olympic Games, Chinese Officials had not

¹¹⁴ Sharon K. Hom, “The Promise of a ‘People’s Olympics’,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 67.

¹¹⁵ “The Olympics Countdown—Broken Promises.” Amnesty International, July 29, 2008, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/090/2008/en> (accessed September 20, 2008).

¹¹⁶ Andrew Jacobs, “Too Old and Frail to Re-educate? Not in China,” *New York Times*, August 21, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/21/sports/olympics/21protest.html> (accessed September 3, 2008).

allowed a single protest. The police have received 77 protest applications, but each has been dropped as the issues have been “solved through consultation, dialogue.”¹¹⁷

Police violence is widespread in China. In the months leading up to the Olympics the police have been especially sensitive to protecting their image. In preparation for the International Olympic Committee’s visit, a 41-year-old man, Wang Chaoru was removed from his home by the police. The neighborhood committee had instructed them to do so in order to prevent him from embarrassing the city. Wang’s crime was that he was mentally challenged. Instead of being held temporarily and returned to his home following the Committee’s departure, he was beaten to death while in police custody.¹¹⁸

Citizens are not the only ones at risk, however. On August 4, 2008, Chinese paramilitary police beat two Japanese journalists and damaged their equipment as they attempted to cover the attacks against police in Kashgar. The government apologized to the journalists and stated that the police were just short-tempered due to ongoing attacks.¹¹⁹

Violence is not confined to the police force. China is also well known for their excessive use of the death penalty. In 2007, 470 people were officially put to death in China, while Amnesty International estimates the true number to be in the thousands. The death penalty is the punishment for more than 60 crimes in China, ranging from embezzling to damaging electric power plants. Most of those sentenced find swift justice, as they are executed within weeks of sentencing.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Andrew Jacobs, “Too Old and Frail to Re-educate? Not in China,” *New York Times*, August 21, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/21/sports/olympics/21protest.html> (accessed September 3, 2008).

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Kristof, “Introduction: A Lever for Change in China,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 18-19.

¹¹⁹ “Chinese Paramilitary ‘Attack Journalists.’” *CNN.com*, August 5, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/05/china.journalists/index.html?iref=newssearch> (accessed August 7, 2008).

¹²⁰ “China ‘Gold Medal’ for Executions.” *BBC News*, April 15, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7346938.stm> (accessed August 1, 2008).

C. BEGINNINGS OF CHANGE?

1. Legal System

In order for a nation to move forward with significant infrastructure and political change, they must have a justice system which meets basic international standards. In other words, they must be able to enforce policies consistently; individuals should have the right to a fair trial, and to avoid arbitrary detention. In the criminal justice system in the Chinese Communist Party, many of these rights are sidetracked by using extra judicial punishment. The use of this punishment means that many of those accused never see trial but may spend years in “re-education camps.”¹²¹

The Supreme People’s Court (SPC) has been able to make minor in roads towards the end of justice over the past decade. Despite their efforts, reforms are slow. According to Jerome Cohen, ratifying the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as ensuring compliance with this covenant by enacting new legislation will create more rapid reforms. The Criminal Procedure Laws in China allow suspects to speak with their lawyers while detained, confront those who accuse them, and hold a formal hearing rather than just review records of cases under appeal. What is not delineated, however, is the definition of presumption of innocence and a suspect’s right to silence to prevent self-incrimination.¹²²

Thus far, the only major change the SPC has made is a reduction in the number of death penalty cases. The SPC has the final review of all death penalty cases. The SPC has also encouraged the courts to suspend the death sentence for two years in order to determine if the individual can be rehabilitated.¹²³

¹²¹ Jerome Cohen, “A Slow March to Legal Reform,” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympic Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 157-158.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 156-157.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

2. Internet Freedom

In 2004, Shi Tao, a reporter for the Dangdai Shang Bao of Hunan, forwarded his description of political directives given to Chinese journalists regarding the coverage of the fifteenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Shi Tao was eventually sentenced to ten years in prison. He was identified by digital fingerprints given to the Chinese government by a Yahoo subsidiary. Cisco, Google, Microsoft, Nortel Networks, Sun Microsystems and Yahoo all operate the internet systems within China. They must do so under the CCP's "Golden Shield." In other words, these companies must censor the services they provide in order to meet with the strict standards of the CCP.¹²⁴

The Golden Shield is also known as the "Great Firewall of China." It began in 1998 and is estimated to have cost 800 million dollars. It is estimated that around 30,000 police are involved in the project. It has the ability to block content by preventing IP addresses from being routed through and consists of standard firewall and proxy servers at the Internet gateways. It can also provide DNS poisoning when specific sites are requested. While the government does not appear to be systematically monitoring content, they are censoring key word searches and ensuring that controversial topics are not available.¹²⁵

Chinese officials promised to completely unblock internet access for visitors during the Olympic Games. Officials stated that there would be limited restrictions within hotel room and computer banks reserved for journalists. This promise was only partially fulfilled. The IOC supported Beijing's continued censoring of the internet. Any site which presented controversial data would simply not load.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Richard C. Morais, "Cracks in the Wall," Forbes.com, February 27, 2006, <http://www.forbes.com/global/2006/0227/018A.html> (accessed November 23, 2008).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ James Fallows, "'The Connection Has Been Reset,'" The Atlantic, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200803/chinese-firewall> (accessed August 8, 2008).

3. Transparency

Transparency was first used to describe trade relations when the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was established following World War Two. Since then, the definition of transparency in government has expanded to virtually every realm. The more transparent a nation's government is, the less incidence of corruption and violations of human rights within that nation. Historically, Beijing is not known for its transparency. Most recently they have been asked to reveal the true numbers of executions conducted each year, but have not complied.¹²⁷ Along these lines, human rights activists would like to know for which offenses individuals are in jail.

¹²⁷ "China 'Gold Medal' for Executions." BBC News, April 15, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7346938.stm> (accessed August 1, 2008).

**IV. “IF THE COST OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS IS TEARS,
BLOOD, LIVES AND THE EVICTION OF PEOPLE FROM THEIR
HOMES, THEN WE WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE THESE
OLYMPICS”¹²⁸**

A. RELOCATION OF URBAN RESIDENTS

In an effort to make Beijing appear more beautiful and prevent protest in the lead-up to the Olympic Games, many citizens were either forced to leave the city or their homes were strategically covered from tourist view. At times, local officials were overzealous in their attempts to remove obstacles to the success of the Olympic Games. Again, this negatively impacts Beijing’s image and thus its influence via soft power.

A block of homes along the Olympic Marathon route in Beijing has proven to be an obstacle to the clean image of Beijing. Despite pressure to move, residents and shop owners have refused to vacate the building. After months of coercion proved unsuccessful, an unsigned letter was posted on the shops on July 17th. It simply stated, “In keeping with the government’s request to rectify the Olympic environment, a wall will need to be built around No. 93 South Tianqiao Road.” The following morning, bricklayers arrived to cover the unsightly buildings with a ten foot high wall. Thus, making it impossible for the small shops to take advantage of Olympic traffic.¹²⁹

Beijing’s Municipal Construction Committee (BMCC) claims that only 14,901 people from 6,307 households were relocated in order to facilitate Olympic construction. The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) disputes this figure however. The COHRE claims that 1.25 million people have been displaced. The disparity in these numbers can be easily explained by the definition each group utilized to gather data. The

¹²⁸ Sharon K. Hom, “The Promise of a ‘People’s Olympics,’” in *China’s Great Leap: The Beijing Games and Olympic Human Rights Challenges*, ed. Minky Worden (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 68.

¹²⁹ Jake Hooker, “Before Guests Arrive, Beijing Hides Some Messes,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/29/sports/olympics/29beijing.html?scp=1&sq=beijing%20hides%20some%20messes&st=Search> (accessed September 8, 2008).

BMCC only included individuals who had been displaced for the construction a specific Olympic venue, whereas the COHRE reflects all those who were displaced by construction to make Beijing more modern and able to handle the rapid influx of people.¹³⁰ Additionally, the BMCC claims that all individuals moved voluntarily and were adequately compensated.¹³¹

In order to receive compensation, families had to prove ownership. If they were able to do so, they were given approximately \$87,500. Displaced persons and their advocates dispute this claim. They argue that compensation money was taken by corrupt local officials. They also state that if a resident refused to leave, the police used heavy handed tactics in order to remove them forcibly. Furthermore, the compensation did not always match the value of the property. Renters received no compensation for relocation.¹³²

B. UNREST IN TIBET

1. Protest within Tibet

The sovereignty of Tibet has been under protest for centuries. Both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China agree that Tibet became a part of China during the Yuan dynasty. Unfortunately, Tibet does not agree that this is the case. Followers of the Dalai Lama, the leader of the Tibetan Government in Exile, believe that Tibet is an autonomous state. While this debate is ongoing, protests were taken very seriously in the lead up to the Beijing Olympic Games.¹³³

¹³⁰ James Reynolds, "'Thousands' Moved for China Games," BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/7254424> (accessed November 5, 2008).

¹³¹ "Briefing on the Relocation Project for Olympic Venues," The Games of the XXIX Olympiad, February 20, 2008, <http://en.beijing2008.cn/news/official/preparation/n214253222.shtml> (accessed November 10, 2008).

¹³² Maureen Fan, "China Defends Relocation Policy: Pre-Olympics Construction Pushes Thousands From Homes," Washington Post, February 20, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/19/AR2008021901612.html> (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹³³ "Regions and Territories: Tibet," BBC news, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4152353.stm> (accessed September 20, 2008).

International protests over the status of Tibet were rampant during the year preceding the Olympics, but they were nothing new. Western nations have long shown emotional support for Tibetan independence. That being the case, the Chinese government was less concerned over these longstanding protests than they were the internal turmoil which became more heated in the months immediately prior to the Games and prompted significantly more international reaction.

On March 10, 2008, the forty-ninth anniversary of a failed Tibetan uprising in 1959, the people of Tibet gathered in protest against Chinese policies in Tibet. The protests then turned violent with Tibetans attacking other ethnic groups leading to rioting and looting. The response of the Chinese government to the violent protests in Tibet was harsh. In Western opinion, it was disproportional to the threat posed by the uprising. In the opinion of officials in Beijing, the appropriate steps were taken in order to protect the sovereignty of the Chinese state. Information on the actual methods of crackdown is scarce, as the Chinese government removed all foreign journalists from the area following the beginning of the protests. Chinese officials released a death toll of only 18 people; however, some reports indicate that up to 350 people were killed as a result of the riots.¹³⁴

Wen Jiabao, the Premier of the People's Republic of China, blamed the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, for inciting the protests. The Dalai Lama retorted that they were just the natural manifestation of widespread discontent in Tibet. The argument then reached the international stage with many Western nations siding with the Tibetan Government in exile. The result of Western criticism was a massive backlash of nationalism amongst the non-Tibetan Chinese population. They did not feel it was the place of Western powers to try to interfere with internal Chinese affairs. The furor surrounding these events was briefly interrupted when the world was distracted by the Sichuan Earthquake.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Michael Bristow, "China Keeping a Tight Grip on Tibet," BBC News, June 3, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7433659.stm> (accessed July 17, 2008).

¹³⁵ "A Lama in Sheep's Clothing," *The Economist*, May 10, 2008, 51.

2. Protest Along the Torch Route

The Olympic Torch traveled across six continents over 34 days.¹³⁶ In every major Western city through which the Olympic torch travelled, it was met with protest. The vast majority of these protestors were denouncing the CCP's stance in relation to Tibet. However, there was a large contingent of pro-China and Beijing Olympic supporters.

London was the first Western city to host the Olympic torch on April 6. By the end of the day, 37 protestors had been arrested. Even with an increased police presence throughout the city as well as unpublished route changes, the protestors continued to harass torchbearers. One protester even attempted to steal the torch from the hands of Konnie Huq. The Olympic torch relay spokesman, Qu Yingpu stated, "This is not the right time, the right platform, for any people to voice their political views. So we are very grateful and very thankful to the people in London, the police and the organizers, for their efforts trying to keep order."¹³⁷

The next day, April 7th, the torch arrived in Paris. The flame was met with spectacular protests. The last leg of the route had to be cancelled all together after the flame was extinguished at least five times. At some points, the police had to use tear gas to remove protestors who were lying in the road. Protestors even toppled a wheelchair athlete in an attempt to grab the torch. Even Paris' mayor got involved by hanging a banner from city hall which read "Paris City of Human Rights."¹³⁸

The torch arrived in San Francisco on April 9. Not surprisingly, it was met with protest there as well. In order to prevent the level of protest which occurred in Paris and London, the published route was not used. Thousands of protestors waiting at the published end of the route never had a chance to voice their sentiments. Angry protestors

¹³⁶ "Planned Torch Relay Route," Beijing Olympics, <http://torchrelay.beijing2008.cn/en/journey/calendar/> (accessed November 15, 2008).

¹³⁷ "Clashes Along Olympic Torch Route," BBC News, April 6, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7332942.stm (accessed September 30, 2008).

¹³⁸ "Olympic Torch Hit by Protests During Paris Leg," CNN.com, April 7, 2007, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/04/07/oly.torchrelay/index.html?iref=newssearch#cnnSTCText> (accessed August 5, 2008).

on both sides felt that the city's hiding of the flame did not give any party a chance to see the flame or voice their issues. While they waited for a torch which never arrived, several scuffles broke out amongst the protestors.¹³⁹

C. SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE

On May 12, 2008, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake rocked the Sichuan Province. Following the initial earthquake, tens of thousands of aftershocks further shook the province. In the end, nearly 70,000 people were killed and 18,000 people were missing.¹⁴⁰ Beijing's reaction to the earthquake proved to be a positive reflection on both the government and the Chinese people. The ability of both to join together in order to save as many lives as possible was a demonstration of the strength of the nation which temporarily improved China's soft power.

Shortly after the massive earthquake, Wen Jiabao flew to manage the rescue work, at some points in tears. Meanwhile Hu Jintao promised a rapid disaster response. The Chinese government was praised for their quick response to the tragedy, as well as their level of openness with the media and the Western world. In the largest mark of national mourning since the death of Deng Xiaoping, a three day mourning period was observed starting May 19, 2008. On the same day, people spontaneously broke into nationalistic cheers. Crowds were seen shouting "Go China!" while punching their fists in the air.¹⁴¹

In the weeks following the earthquake, the parents of hundreds of students who were killed in collapsed schools began to demand answers. They felt that the school buildings were the products of faulty construction. When these parents began to

¹³⁹ Maggie Seals, "Houdini Torch' Relay Disappoints," BBC News, April 10, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7339923.stm> (accessed June 24, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ "Deadly Earthquake Hits China Ahead of Games," CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/05/china.earthquake/index.html> (accessed September 8, 2008).

¹⁴¹ "The Earthquake in Sichuan: China Helps Itself," *The Economist*, May 22, 2008, http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11409357 (accessed August 2, 2008).

protest, their images were powerful. Standing before the rubble where their children had passed away, they placed signs protesting the construction and flowers honoring their dead.¹⁴²

When local officials saw the protests, they immediately removed the signs and the flowers. Following public protest over the removal of flowers, officials replaced those, but not the signs.¹⁴³ In the end, the central government admitted that over 7,000 schools had been inadequately engineered.¹⁴⁴ For parents who had lost an only child, they were allowed to have a second “replacement” child with no fees.¹⁴⁵ This was little comfort to parents who were too old to conceive again or had been volunteeringly sterilized. Some parents have even been offered pensions in order to prevent them from launching further protests.¹⁴⁶

D. DARFUR

Steven Spielberg was hired as a creative director of the Beijing Olympics. Two months before the Games, he refused to participate. He stated that China’s inaction in Darfur should not be supported. He encouraged further protest and potential boycott of the Beijing Games. Further, he believed that China should use their influential business ties in Darfur to encourage an end to the violence. China’s initial response was that their actions in Darfur were in keeping with their policy of non-interference in another nation’s sovereign affairs.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Michael Bristow, “China Reins in Quake School Fury,” BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7434054.stm> (accessed July 23, 2008).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Wong, “China Admits Building Flaws in Quake,” New York Times, September 4, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/05/world/asia/05china.html?emc=rss&partner=rssnyt> (accessed September 30, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ “China Revises One-Child Policy After Earthquake,” USA Today, May 26, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-05-26-china-one-child_N.htm (accessed June 7, 2008).

¹⁴⁶ Edward Wong, “China Admits Building Flaws in Quake,” New York Times, September 4, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/05/world/asia/05china.html?emc=rss&partner=rssnyt> (accessed September 30, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Michael Bristow, “China ‘Regrets’ Spielberg Action,” BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/asia-pacific/7244133.stm> (accessed July 20, 2008).

Beijing's fear was that Steven Spielberg's protest would cause major contributors to back out of the Games or incite further challenges by celebrities. He was actually late to join a group of celebrities to publicly protest China's role in Darfur leading up the Games. Mia Farrow, a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations, was outspoken in her objections to the Beijing Olympics. She started a campaign in March to have the 2008 Games labeled, the "Genocide Olympics."¹⁴⁸

In April, Zhai Jun, a senior Chinese official was dispatched to Darfur to encourage the Sudanese government to welcome a UN Peacekeeping force in the region. While in the region, Mr. Zhai even toured three refugee camps. Even though his actions show a modest concession to Darfur activists, he stated that individuals who want to boycott the Games are "either ignorant or ill natured." As Beijing does not typically attempt to interfere with the sovereignty of other nations, they did not make any specific demands of the Sudanese government. Mr. Zhai suggested that, "the Sudan side show flexibility and accept" United Nations peacekeepers.¹⁴⁹ In this case, international pressure related to the Games actually had a positive, but minimal affect on Chinese foreign policy.

E. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Beijing repeatedly promised that journalists and visitors to Beijing would be granted unrestrained internet access. When journalists arrived, they found this was not the case. Reporters were not able to access web sites that discussed issues of Taiwanese independence, Tiananment Square protests, Tibet, Amnesty International or newspapers which are known for open political debate. The restrictions on reporters are exactly contrary to what had been promised by both Beijing and the IOC and strongly resemble the restrictions on the Internet which face Chinese citizens. Additionally, it

¹⁴⁸ Helene Cooper, "Darfur Collides with Olympics and China Yields," New York Times, April 13, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/13/washington/13diplo.html> (accessed June 23, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

undermines the argument that the Olympics would help to make China more open to the international community and therefore further undermines the use of the Olympics to increase China's soft power.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Jacobs, "China to Limit Web Access During Olympic Games," *New York Times*, July 31, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/31/sports/olympics/31china.html?partner=rssnyt> (accessed August 3, 2008).

V. OLYMPIC GOALS ATTAINED?

A. PUBLIC IMAGE

1. Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics was filled with meaning and grandeur for the host nation. Sadly two choices marred the success of this ceremony. First, officials chose to use pre-recorded fireworks to supplement the show.¹⁵¹ Second, the child who sang the national anthem lip synched. Since she was cuter than her classmate, she was given the honor of providing a face for the Games.¹⁵² Both of these choices led some Chinese citizens to feel that they were made to look foolish. Knowing that they could provide both successful fireworks and adorable child singers made many question the need for deception.

More than 100 “national government dignitaries” attended the Beijing Olympic Games, but officials did not say how many attended the Opening Ceremony. Several world leaders chose not to attend the ceremony. American, Australian, French, and Taiwanese leaders all chose to attend. British, German, and Canadian leaders were not present. Also not in attendance were the leaders of Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iran, and North Korea.¹⁵³

2. American Killed

On August 9, an American couple visiting Beijing to watch their cousin coach the Men’s indoor volleyball team was attacked by a Chinese citizen. The assailant killed

¹⁵¹ “Beijing Enhanced Olympic Show with Faked ‘Fireworks,’” CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/08/12/fake.fireworks.ap/> (accessed September 8, 2008).

¹⁵² John Vause, “Olympic Girl Seen But Not Heard,” CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/12/oly.kids/> (accessed September 8, 2008).

¹⁵³ “Opening Ceremony Tough Call For World Leaders,” MSNBC, August 7, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26049343/> (accessed August 10, 2008).

Todd Bachman and seriously injured his wife, Barbara, before committing suicide.¹⁵⁴ The incident was the only one of this nature at the Games; however it garnered significant international attention at the start of the Games.

3. Controversy on the Chinese Women's Gymnastic Team

In order to compete in gymnastics at the Olympic level, athletes must be at least 16 years of age. A month prior to the Olympic Games, a member of China's female gymnastic team, He Kexin, was listed in local documents as being too young to compete in the Games. Chinese officials denied the veracity of local newspapers in reporting the ages and maintained their claim that the athletes could compete.¹⁵⁵ As the Chinese team won gold largely as a result of these athletes' efforts, the IOC was urged to investigate further. The IOC's investigation lasted five and a half weeks and concluded that the athletes were eligible to compete. Many question the IOC's findings, however, due to the paucity of documentation available to make a certain conclusion.

4. Medals Won

While American athletes achieved the highest number of medals at the Olympic Games, Chinese athletes were awarded the highest number of gold medals. Both the American men and women were awarded 53 total medals, while the Chinese men were awarded 42 medals and the Chinese women were awarded 57. In this respect, the Chinese athletes fell ten medals short of their goal of dominated the Olympic medal race.

5. Impact of Russian Invasion of Georgia

On the day of the opening ceremony, Russian forces invaded Georgia. The swiftness and brutality of this invasion shocked the international community. Over the course of the Olympic Games, much attention was focused away from sport and thrust

¹⁵⁴ "American Killed at Games was Coach's Father-in-Law," CNN.com, August 9, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/09/olympics.murder/index.html?iref=newssearch> (accessed August 11, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ "Chinese News Service Reported That Gold medal Gymnast Was 13," *Sports Illustrated*, August 14, 2008, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/olympics/2008/08/14/underage.gymnasts/index.html> (accessed September 8, 2008).

upon the failure of diplomacy. Many predicted that this event was the beginning of a new Cold War. The Russian actions significantly lessened the impact of the Beijing Games on the World.

B. POLICY CHANGES MADE

1. Press Freedom

Press freedom in China is largely the same as it was prior to the Olympics. Foreign journalists must still request permission to visit controversial areas. Journalists are also still subject to incarceration and harassment. In fact, the Olympic Games caused Beijing authorities to enforce even more strict standards of behavior. It can be concluded that press freedom was negatively affected by Beijing hosting the Olympic Games.

2. Human Rights

As was the case with press freedom, human rights were negatively impacted by the Olympic Games. Not only were people relocated in mass— including millions of migrant workers—but they were forced into house arrest if they applied to protest. The legal system has seen limited reforms. China still boasts the largest number of executions and an unknown number of political prisoners.

In one minor concession, Beijing did reach out on the Darfur issue. They were not willing to go so far as to demand action, but they were at least willing to request that Sudan consider U.N. intervention. They have not, however, shifted any of their trade with Sudan in order to encourage that change.

C. POSSIBILITIES FOR LONG TERM-CHANGE

While hosting of the Olympic Games shows little short-term improvement, the continued openness of the Chinese government to the outside world will no doubt lead to greater change. Additionally, China's continued economic and industrial growth will

involve greater interdependence with foreign economies. The question becomes one of whether the international community will influence Chinese politics or whether China will influence international politics.

Using the Olympic Games as an example of the future of Chinese interaction with other nations, one can assume that the Chinese government will continue to make changes. These changes will not be at a pace determined by foreign powers, but at a speed that is comfortable for the CCP and the Chinese people. Human rights and environmental issues will continue to improve as the legal system improves. Many of the changes will be in line with Western demands, but the changes will be strictly Chinese. As foreign powers used rhetoric instead of action in their attempts to change Beijing prior to the Games, they will do the same in future issues regarding social change in China.

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